



News Release

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UDOH Recommends Second Trimester Dental Cleaning to Help Reduce the Chance of Babies Born Too Early & Too Small UDOH Pilots First Medicaid Intervention Study for Pregnant Women

(Salt Lake City, UT) – An intervention as simple as thorough teeth cleaning may reduce premature birth rates. According to a University of Alabama study, gum disease can cause babies to be born too soon and too small. Babies born too early are at a significant risk of developing serious and lasting health problems. The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is making a new recommendation for a second trimester teeth cleaning for pregnant women. In addition, the UDOH is launching the first Medicaid study in the nation to track the effectiveness of the intervention.

Alabama's study shows that getting teeth cleaned during the second trimester of pregnancy can make a difference in healthy births and pregnancies. The national study, conducted by Marjorie Jeffcoat, D.M.D., tested 1,300 pregnant women at the Perinatal Emphasis Research Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. One of the theories is that the bacteria associated with gum disease produces a hormone that is thought to begin contractions. For a copy of the study, visit <http://www.altcorp.com/AffinityLaboratory/pretermperio.htm>.

To take advantage of this new information and in order to help all pregnant women, the UDOH recommends the following:

- Pregnant women and women planning to become pregnant should have a dental check-up. This should include an evaluation of the gums.
- Patients should receive education on how to keep their mouths healthy. They should learn about how gum infection can affect their pregnancy.

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Page 2 of 2 - UDOH Recommends Second Trimester Dental Cleaning

- Dentists and physicians should coordinate care especially when gum disease is diagnosed.
- Physicians should make referrals for dental care during pregnancy.
- Treatment of gum disease, which includes a thorough teeth cleaning, may be most effective between 22 to 26 weeks of pregnancy.

The UDOH's Medicaid and Oral Health Programs have launched the pilot study to hopefully reduce pre-term, low-birth weight babies born to pregnant women who receive Medicaid benefits. The pilot study will include pregnant women with Medicaid insurance who live in Salt Lake and Davis counties. These women will be offered dental examinations, treatment of decayed teeth and a thorough cleaning of their teeth at the UDOH's Family Dental Plan Clinics.

The study is now in place and UDOH hopes to have at least 500 women have participate. The UDOH will then compare birth data collected from women participating in the project with women who did not participate. At the close of the pilot study, the project may expand to include pregnant women who are on Medicaid statewide. Medicaid covers about 15,000 Utah births each year. In 2002, 49,140 babies were born in Utah.

To enroll in the study, the UDOH invites all pregnant women who have Medicaid benefits to call one of three clinics to make an appointment for a check-up. The Family Dental Plan will schedule an appointment regardless of whether the pregnant woman qualifies for the study. To make an appointment, call:

Family Dental Plan/Salt Lake Clinic – 3195 S. Main, Suite 200 - 468-0342

Family Dental Plan/Ellis R. Shipp Public Health Center – 4535 S. 5600 W. - 969-8243

Family Dental Plan /Layton Clinic – 360 S. Fort Lane, Suite 3A - 546-2263

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.